



BLM Fact Sheet

U.S. Department of the Interior • Bureau of Land Management

High Rock Wild Horse Complex

What is the High Rock Complex?

- The High Rock Wild Horse Complex includes five herd management areas – Bitner, Fox Hog, High Rock, Nut Mountain and Wall Canyon.
- Horses within these herds roam over nearly 616,000 acres of public lands in Humboldt and Washoe counties in Nevada. BLM-California manages a small area within the state of Nevada that includes the Complex.
- The Complex provides forage and habitat for wild horses as well as wildlife, including the greater sage-grouse, pronghorn, and bighorn sheep.
- The Complex also contains many important biological, geological, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources. The other predominant land uses within the Complex are livestock grazing, wilderness recreation, and general recreation, including hunting.
- The High Rock Complex is part of the Tri State Management Area of northwest Nevada and southeast Oregon. In this region, the BLM Winnemucca, Northern California and Lakeview Districts and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sheldon National Wildlife refuge are coordinating on management of wild horses on BLM-managed lands and feral horses on the wildlife refuge. The agencies are sharing information on wild horse populations and movement and natural resource conditions to better understand population dynamics and improve management efficiencies.
- The horses within the High Rock Complex are descendants of local ranch horses and cavalry mounts. Over the years, local ranchers improved the herd quality by culling horses with undesirable traits and introducing horses with desirable traits.



Wild Horses in the High Rock Complex

What needs to be done to maintain this herd?

- To maintain healthy horse herds and restore or maintain the rangelands in a healthy condition, the BLM plans to gather enough horses to restore the population to a level that can be sustained in balance with the other uses described above.
- Through a land use planning effort in 2008 that included full public involvement, the BLM determined the appropriate management level (AML) is a range between 258 and 451 horses. However, A July 2011 aerial survey estimates that more than 1,300 horses are living

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in or adjacent to the Complex, an overpopulation resulting in ongoing damage to the rangelands.

- Under the 1971 Wild, Free-roaming Horse and Burro Act, when this occurs, BLM is required to "remove excess animals" to "restore a thriving ecological balance to the range."
- BLM plans to gather as many of the total population as possible (about 1,270 horses), remove about 1,000 excess wild horses, and return to the range enough horses to bring the population in the complex back to within the AML range of 258-451.
- Of the horses returned to the range, mares will receive a fertility control vaccine, and more stallions than mares would be returned to slow the growth of the herd.
- About 400 of the horses to be gathered are living on public and private lands outside of herd management areas and will be removed in accordance with the provisions of the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act.
- The horses removed will be offered for adoption through the BLM's wild horse and burro adoption program, or placed in long-term holding pastures.

Why is the gather necessary?

- Overpopulated wild horse herds overuse the rangeland, threatening their own health and the health of native wildlife and plants, damaging scarce water sources, and reducing water quality.
- Many riparian areas, including those where there has been no livestock grazing, have been heavily trampled. This causes stream banks to deteriorate, impacting water quality.
- Because precipitation has been below normal for nine of the past 11 years, 88% of the natural springs are producing little or no water. In their search for water, horses have heavily trampled these areas, and even scraped out holes to collect water.
- Livestock grazing is also a factor, but BLM can actively manage this authorized use to mitigate the impacts. Wild horses roam freely, year-round, as the law allows.



Damaged Spring Development

How does BLM balance wild horses, burros with livestock management?

- Overall, livestock use in the herd management areas of the High Rock Complex has declined by between 20 – 50 % over the past 50 years. Currently, under the 2008 plan, BLM authorizes up to 3,622 cattle to use the allotments during specified times throughout the year.
- Forage is allocated by Animal Unit Months or AUMs. An AUM is the amount of forage consumed in a month by an adult horse, a mare and foal, two burros, an adult cow or cow and calf, or five sheep.
- Under the plan, 29,356 AUMs are allocated annually for cattle. Wild horses and burros are allocated about 5,412 AUMs based on the range of AML numbers.
- Cattle have used an average 17,635 AUMs, or 60% of their authorized allocation annually over the last 6 years. Wild horse use has increased annually to 15,912 AUMs in 2009, about 294% of their allocated AUMs.



Mare and Foal

For more information: <http://www.blm.gov/ca/highrock>

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